

Mumps

Disease Fact sheet Series

What is mumps?

Mumps is a viral infection that can cause swelling of the salivary glands of an infected person.

Who can get mumps?

Mumps can affect any person of any age who has not had the disease or been immunized against it.

How is mumps spread?

The virus is in the saliva of an infected person and is spread from person to person through the air by coughing, sneezing or simply talking. Mumps is less contagious than measles or chickenpox.

What are the signs and symptoms of mumps?

The disease begins with low grade fever, headache, muscle pain and general feeling of discomfort. Commonly the cheek and jaw area (salivary glands) swells on one or both sides within the first 2 days of illness.

How soon do symptoms appear after exposure?

Children start to show signs of mumps 2 to 3 weeks after they are exposed.

How can a doctor confirm that an illness is mumps?

Confirmation is through a blood test.

When and for how long is a person able to spread mumps?

From 3 days before the onset of symptoms to the fourth day after symptoms begin.

(Over)

What are the complications associated with mumps?

About 1 child in every 10 who gets mumps also gets meningitis (an inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord). Occasionally mumps can cause encephalitis, which is inflammation of the brain itself. Usually, the child recovers without permanent damage. About 1 out of 4 teenage or adult men who get mumps develop a painful swelling of the testicles. Mumps can, rarely, cause deafness (about 1 in 20,000 cases) or death (about 1 in 10,000 cases).

Is there a treatment for mumps?

There is no specific treatment for mumps.

Can mumps be prevented?

Yes. Mumps vaccine given in combination with Measles and Rubella (called MMR vaccine) is recommended for all children at 12-15 months of age and at 4-6 years of age. The two doses of vaccine normally provide life long immunity.

Does a past infection with mumps make a person immune for life?

Yes. A common belief is that if a person only gets swelling on one side of their face that they can get mumps a second time. This is not true.